

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JONES,
COMMANDING GENERAL, COALITION POLICE ASSISTANCE TRAINING TEAM, VIA
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GEN. JONES: Hi, everybody, this is Major General Mike Jones, the
commander of CPATT.

I understand we have seven or eight people on the line and what I
thought we'd do is -- I'd open up with kind of a little background on some of
what we're doing and then try to get the questions fairly quickly. Hopefully,
everybody can hear me okay and if somebody is having a hard time hearing me,
speak up and I'll be louder or quieter, whichever way you prefer.

CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, OASD PA): All right,
sir. I think we've got you loud and clear.

GEN. JONES: Okay. Super. First of all here in CPATT, you know, we
basically do three things, as you know. We try to help the Iraqis generate
forces. We try to help them support those forces with what's necessary for
them to be effective and then we try to help the minister in the ministry itself
develop the capacity so they can fully takeover those functions and be
independent and be able to provide their support role to the police and interior
forces.

You know, we're into a new year and just to review a little bit about
where we've been. Last year, I think, you know, we saw a fairly remarkable year
on the part of interior forces. They grew from almost 50,000 to almost 410,000
if you include all of the forces that are in the Ministry of Interior and that
includes not only the Iraqi police, but of course, the national police, also,
the Department of Border Enforcement is a part of the ministry, the ports of
entry, the force protection services and a variety of other kinds of forces.

So that net increase of almost 60,000 during the course of last year is
fairly remarkable by any standard.

I think the recruiting situation continues to remain strong and,
really, the biggest development that we've seen, which is part of what
facilitated that big growth last year was the ability to recruit in places where
traditionally the police forces have had a hard time recruiting. The biggest
example of that is probably al-Anbar Province where it used to be very difficult
to recruit people to be policemen and last year we saw that force grow by about
8,000, actually in the last six months of last year is where most of that growth
took place, but even in other areas and not just al-Anbar, but Salahuddin and

Diyala Province, Baghdad, West Baghdad and other places, we're really seeing the Sunni portion of the population come into the forces and that includes -- we've actually seen in addition to local police, seeing that force of that population wanting to join. We're actually seeing an increased Sunni interest in joining the national police and national level forces.

This last month, we graduated a class of national policemen; almost 2,000 strong down at the Numaniya training center and about 50 percent of those were Sunnis who had been recruited from al-Anbar, west Baghdad and Salahuddin areas.

So we're actually starting to see changes there as well. The national police also are making progress. They completed some big changes last year in terms of leadership. You all I'm sure are familiar with the numbers of leaders -- they changed out at division brigade and battalion level, essentially, all of the division and brigade commanders and about two-thirds of the battalion level commanders.

What may not be known is they also changed out several thousand of the police themselves where they got rid of folks that had bad records of performance or had violated some sort of principle of conduct.

So they have made a fairly significant reform effort. Their performance has improved markedly and that's reflected in a lot of the security conditions in the areas that they're in and Baghdad, here in Baghdad, a little less than half of the area of Baghdad really is under the sector control of national police units and they have contributed significantly to the change in the security conditions here.

So that's good and right now, they've entered a new phase and that is they have the Italian carabinieri who have come to Iraq in order to set up a training program that is a very high end policing skill leadership development program, which one battalion of the national police rotating through that at a time. They've already graduated two battalions and in the coming week, they'll have the third battalion start rotating through that training cycle.

In addition to that, just as another example, the Baghdad police are also expanding. Since last August, they've increased the Baghdad police force by a little over 11,000 new policemen and it's well on its way to achieving a goal that they set for themselves of accomplishing a little bit more than 12,600 by April and so they're making significant progress there and that includes a significant number of what were called concerned local citizens now are called Sons of Iraq and about 2,500 of those folks are part of that growth, which again, is primarily Sunni, although not completely, some of those are Shi'a, but primarily Sunni, that are in those neighborhoods that have volunteered for service.

But we're not without challenges, of course, clearly, any institution that grows as fast as the Iraqi police services and the Ministry of Interior forces have grown, are going to be challenged. All of the kinds of problems that anyone would have such as institutional processes that would work in a smaller force when you expand it that much, that same process doesn't work as well, you know, the timeline to recruit basic policemen is a lot shorter than the timeline to build facilities for those policemen or to get equipment for them or to develop leaders for that force.

And so just like anybody else, their experience and challenges in all those areas and so they don't have all of the equipment for these forces that they should have. They still have shortages in facilities and, clearly, the mature of qualified leaders that you need to have for the size force they've grown, they're behind in developing those because those are longer term things to do.

So I think as I look at it, I see that they're making reasonable progress. They are making good progress in developing ministerial capacity to perform critical functions and there are still significant challenges ahead, but if you look at what they've accomplished, then it leaves you reasonably optimistic that they'll be able to continue to build on that progress and get to the point where the police can assume their rightful place in the security role here in the country.

So with that, I'll go ahead and open it up for questions about whatever you have about either the ministry or police forces. MR. HOLT: Thank you very much, General -- Major General Michael Jones with us this morning for the Bloggers Roundtable.

And when I call your name, please also announce your publication.

So, Spencer, you were first online, why don't you get us started?

Q Thanks very much, general, for talking with us. I'm Spencer Ackerman from The Washington Independent.

First, could I just ask for a point of clarification on that? You said over the last year, MOI forces went from 50,000 to 410,000?

GEN. JONES: No, no, about 350,000.

Q Three hundred and fifty thousand. Okay. That makes a lot more sense. Sorry.

My question is: How do you assess the continued relationship of MOI forces to Shi'ite militias and death squads? I embedded with a U.S. military police company last March in western Baghdad and they told me a problem that they still faced very seriously was, you know, getting tipped off about their movements even when they tried to enforce operational security to insurgents and death squad forces that would attack them, having IPS who would take off their uniforms at night and go out hunting Sunnis if they were Shi'ites, for instance.

You've heard all the horror stories and then from the IPs themselves, many commanders in western Baghdad where I was would tell me that a lot of the sectarian forces were people who they were assigned to them by the MOI and were afraid that the ministry itself was an engine of sectarian violence and they were afraid of the ministry.

Where does this stand now?

GEN. JONES: I would tell you that I can't -- I've been here since July, towards the middle of July and I would never say that none of that exists, but I would tell you that whatever the numbers of incidents that there of that appear to me to be way down and well hidden.

I have been looking very hard and this is one of the things we look at extremely hard is to try to ferret out activities that are either associated with some sort of militia or are sectarian in nature and although you have what I call a lot of echo that has, frankly, faded over time since I've been here, we have had a very hard time finding actual confirmed incidents of the sectarian operations or complicit militia, complicit operations by police.

Now, you know, one of the good indicators of that I would guess would be the number of civilian deaths. During the time that you were here and when I first got here, if you look at the number of civilian deaths, it was huge and you know, today, there are very few civilian deaths that are occurring and I attribute that to the fact that you no longer have these death squads out there roaming around town, doing the kinds of things that they were doing a year ago and part of that, I believe, is because of the surge in the increased forces that the coalition has here and the density of those forces in Baghdad, part of it is because of increased numbers of Iraqi military forces, but I think also part of it is because of the increased number and quality of the police forces and their leadership. And like I said, for instance, during the time that you're talking about was right in the period where the national police started firing leaders who were either participating or thought to be participating in that kind of thing. And as you know not only did they fire both the division commanders and all the brigade commanders, but about 18 of the 28 battalion level commanders as well as, like I said, they started getting rid of thousands of folks out of the ranks that were part of that.

And then in addition --

Q Did you say 18 of 28? Was that the figure, the battalion figure?

GEN. JONES: Yeah, 18 of the 28 battalion level commanders were also fired, and so this reform effort to change the behavior of the national police who are the ones who were primarily, I think, some of those units were the ones that were primarily involved in this, that's been a pretty extensive effort and I think it has resulted in a change of behavior that's fairly significant.

So that's kind of how I see it. I don't hear that same thing from the units that I talk to and the leaders of the core units that are out in the field that are working side by side with the police today.

MR. HOLT: All right.

Chuck Simmons.

Q Good evening, general. Chuck Simmons from America's North Shore Journal.

I wanted to ask about the varying responsibility levels of the police organization. We have local police and we have national police. Is there an intermediate level like provincial level police? Is that something that is assumed by the national police? GEN. JONES: Okay. That's a great question, Chuck.

The way that the police are formed, there are national level entities inside the Ministry of Interior and then everything else fits into a category called provincial police. Now, the provincial director of police has district police chiefs where those police are then divided and then in that district, you have stations where each station has a police chief. And so in some provinces,

the districts sort of align themselves up with large population centers so you could actually look at that district chief as a city police chief. In other places like in Baghdad, of course, which is a huge population center, most of the districts are portions of the city and they have nine different districts in the city of Baghdad.

Q So there's not actually a Baghdad chief of police?

GEN. JONES: Well, yeah, actually you do have a Baghdad chief of police, but Baghdad is both a city and a province.

Q Okay.

GEN. JONES: But it's not a municipal police like we would know. It is much more nationally echeloned down than what we consider where the local city council of Jefferson City, Tennessee has a police department under their control.

Q Now, is there a jurisdictional distinction between the national police and the other police?

GEN. JONES: Right now, because we're operating in kind of an emergency environment with a counterinsurgency effort, the national police perform a role that is really on the military side of their paramilitary character and that is, the best I would equate them to would be to kind of like a light infantry unit. Like the carabinieri, you know, the carabinieri in Italy, they have the ability to be everything up to light infantry on the military side and on the police side, everything down towards doing normal law and order stuff on the street.

And so they have a wide range. Right now, the national police here in Iraq are very heavily weighted towards the counterinsurgency effort. The minister's vision and the vision of the commander of the national police is that as the security situation changes that over time they will move out of this role and more into the emergency response role where instead of having a sector that they will respond to a national security event or an emergency crisis kind of situation and deploy to reinforce the local police or the provincial police.

Q Thank you, general.

MR. HOLT: Okay. GEN. JONES: Certainly.

MR. HOLT: Doug, are you still with us?

Q Yes. Sir, this is Doug Vee with the Civilian and Regular Information Defense Group.

I was interested in the carabinieri and the leadership development corps.

You said entire battalions are going to be trained?

GEN. JONES: Right. Doug, what we have is there's a camp that they did this at and what they do is they basically take a battalion at a time out of their sector. They bring them in here. They actually give them a little bit of a break before the training begins. They bring them in and the carabinieri have a program of instruction that is partially skills, kind of higher end skills that these type of units need, partially rule of law, human rights and other

kinds of things that help guys who have been in a more of a paramilitary role on the military side, to help them understand that as the situation changes and they fulfill more police duties, kind of what those duties entail and what the requirements are and those kinds of things and then very intensive on basic leadership skills, helping the leaders develop their small unit leader repertoire of capability.

Q About how many carabinieri instructors do we have?

GEN. JONES: I think the number is something like 56 instructors from the carabinieri and generally it's about 450 of the units, the battalions are about 450 people that come to the training and then, of course, part of what they do as part of the leader development aspect is they use the chain of command, the Iraqi chain of command to do a portion of this training where what they do is they bring the leadership in, they train the leadership to prepare them to train their own police and then they kind of supervise as that's going on and so that's part of this leader development piece that also results in a better trained group of policemen.

Q And how many battalions have completed this training? Are we noticing any performance differences between the trained battalions?

GEN. JONES: Well, it's a little bit early. Prior to this, the first major training effort for the national police is part of this reform effort was what they called re-bluing training and that occurred at a place called Numaniya that's southeast of Baghdad and what they did there was they took one brigade at a time out and took them down and put them through a training cycle that went through really basic skills and basic fundamental policing principles, human rights, legal instruction, rule of law instruction, that kind of thing. And in many cases in those units, that's the first real training that a lot of those units had had and then that ended up with some collective training where they went out and trained as platoons in tactical situations and so forth.

That was done and completed. The last brigade went through that in November, which is then when we started this new carabinieri like training where we then went to an even higher level of sophistication in the training program and that's why they went to one battalion at a time instead of doing a brigade at a time. And so far, they've completed two battalions since November; it's about a month-long force, a little bit more than that and they've completed two battalions and have the third battalion like I said coming in this week.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q Well, thank you, sir. Very interesting. I think the carabinieri concept they're using in RC West in Afghanistan and this is exactly what we got to be doing, the type of things we're doing now, counterinsurgency, law enforcement sort of interacts with the carabinieri paramilitary police force level.

GEN. JONES: Right. Well, one of the reasons why we were very lucky to have the Italians here is because we really don't have an equivalent of this kind of force in the United States and to tell you the truth, the reason why you do have them in Italy is because they've had some problems with mafia and higher levels of violence than what you experience in most communities in many places, and so they've been very useful for them for that kind of thing, and again, just the nature of the environment here in this region. Many of the countries in this region have this kind of a force and it appears to be valuable to them in

terms of dealing with places where you have significant numbers of weapons and criminal elements and that kind of thing that can, on occasion, overwhelm the capability of normal police. It appears in the region that this seems to work, which is why I think the Iraqis are pursuing it and trying to really develop the capability.

Okay. Thanks, Doug, I appreciate it.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Thank you, sir.

And Andrea Tso.

Q Yes, sir. Andrea Tso with the Institute for the Study of War.

I was wondering if you could elaborate about whether or not the Ministry of the Interior has exhibited an increased capacity to execute its budget?

GEN. JONES: Right. That's a great question in an area that we're putting a lot of attention on. The answer is yes. They have an increased capacity that they performed last year and we expect them to do even better this year. I believe and I hesitate to give you the exact numbers because I don't know them off the top of my head, but I believe it was approximately in the low sixties percent of the budget that they were able to execute last year. This year, they came in at about 82 percent, we think, which we don't really have the final numbers on that yet because they are still reconciling the end of year records to make sure that, you know, they account for what's been spent, but our best estimate right now is they're about 82 percent spent or more from last year. In addition to that 82 percent, they wanted to move about \$420 million into foreign military sales accounts so that they could purchase equipment with it and they got permission from the Council of Representatives right at the end of December to do that.

And so that money is in the process of being transferred into foreign military sales. In addition to that, there's a requirement for them to hold onto money that goes into retirement accounts and the withhold for that for this year is about \$100 million.

And so if you add that \$420 to the \$100 million to what they spent during the course of the year, it comes out to a little bit more than 95 percent, almost 96 percent spent, which is a significant improvement.

Now, that's the good news. The downside is that, unfortunately, a good portion of their budget is salary, unlike military forces where the equipment tends to be very expensive like when you buy, you know, aircraft and things like that, police forces, the equipping side of the force is a lot less expensive. So police cars and so forth don't cost as much as tanks and those kinds of things.

So a big portion of that is salaries, which is easiest to spend in a relatively small portion of the budget is in capital goods and infrastructure and those kinds of things. Those are a little bit more difficult to spend.

So in terms of percent spent, of course, the salaries were, for the most part, spent in order to pay their people; the non-salary accounts a little less so.

So that's the big point of emphasis this year is to get the non- salary accounts fully spent in order to help them get the kinds of things that they need for the force.

Does that kind of answer your question, Andrea.

Q Yes, sir. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

DJ Elliott? Q Yes, sir. It's DJ Elliott with the Long War Journal.

I've been reading from what I see in the last 9010 report, they were talking about adding an aburisha (ph) brigade for Anbar and they're building up on the sustainment brigade. What is the status of the IMP expansion? And how big is it planned to go to?

GEN. JONES: Okay, DJ, I'm sorry, you faded out with what is the status.

I didn't hear anything after that.

Q What is the status of the plan for adding IMP units for the regions? And how big are they growing to?

GEN. JONES: Okay. In al-Anbar, a couple of things are going on there, first of all, they expanded the unit. The Iraqi police themselves, they started off the year, I think, somewhere around an authorization for 11,000 or so police. During the course of the year that authorization increased about 24,000 and right now they're at about 24,000 total Iraqi police service policemen.

So they have grown markedly. Now, a lot of that growth because of training capacity, they've only been through a familiarization training for police and they've not been to the full training academy and it's going to take a while in order to get all of those folks that are in the police force to be fully trained, but the fact is that they have grown markedly.

There's also another thing that's happening right now and that is the decision to create a national police unit that can be out in the west. The national police, of course, are under national control, so it's not really a provincial kind of force, but the fact that there will be a national police brigade in that area is another significant development that will add to their capability.

So I think that, you know, that kind of growth up to the current force level of about 24,000 is a significant achievement and I think -- it's hard to predict because right now the Ministry of Interior is looking at the '08 numbers about what size force the different provinces should have in '08, but I suspect the force will stay about the size that is now and as long as the current level of violence is where it is, it appears that that size force seems to be adequate at this point.

Does that answer it, DJ?

Q I was wondering what the status on their sustainment brigade was as well.

GEN. JONES: The sustainment brigade of the national police is an objective for this year. The plan that the national police have is over the course of the year they'll grow that. I think the last time I checked a couple of weeks ago they were at about 425 or so people assigned to that brigade. They have some initial operating capability, for instance, they have a maintenance platoon that's actually performing maintenance on vehicles and so forth, but it's pretty embryonic at this point. The biggest portion of those 425 are in the headquarters elements who are doing the planning to begin to do the acquisition of people and things in facilities and so forth to stand that unit up.

So I think by this time next year, you'll have a functioning sustainment brigade in the national police, but this is a fairly sophisticated unit to build because it'll have maintenance, supply, transportation, medical -- all the sustainment capabilities in it for the national police and those specialties take a little bit longer to develop than your basic policeman.

Q So basically they're KG (sp) status now?

GEN. JONES: Basically, they're what?

Q KG (sp) status. Leadership, but don't have the troops yet.

GEN. JONES: Yeah. They are in the force generation process. They are at the beginning of that.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

And Jared.

Q Yes, sir. Thank you for your time.

Could you talk a little bit -- you mentioned before about the institutionalization and the professionalization of the force and when it comes to the bureaucracy of dealing with the Ministry of Interior, could you talk to those things about life support? About supplying them? About their pay and making sure that they're paid and making sure they know where they're going -- those kind of bureaucratic, day-to-day things which really, long-term, were not there to keep going?

GEN. JONES: Right. Okay. Jared, that's a great question. What we're seeing is a variety of progress in different areas depending on the area, for instance, in some areas, they are essentially independent in terms of pay. When I was here on my last tour, if folks got paid it was because the coalition was involved helping to make it happen. At this point, we're not involved in the pay pretty much at all. Every once in a while, you will hear of a pay issue with a specific individual or something and we'll pass the word on, but pay is really self-sustaining, an Iraqi function that fully occurs inside the ministry that doesn't get any support from us.

In other areas, life support -- what we did, you know, a year ago was we basically provided all the life support for all the training academies in that business and at this point, about three-quarters of the academies, we've transitioned the life support to the Iraqis. They are doing it through direct contracting in most cases and we're in the process for the last portion of

transitioning those responsibilities so that the Iraqis are paying all the life support costs for their installations and so forth.

In other areas, supply -- they have made some real progress, but they still need a significant amount of support, and again, it goes back to, frankly, with this sized growth, just the volume of the material needed to support them would bring, you know, most organizations to their knees and it's just -- they are improving and we are funneling material that we're acquiring through the ministry in order to be then distributed to provinces and units, but it's a challenge for them to do that all on their own right now, but there is some good news and that they are making some progress, for instance, one of the items that got a little bit of attention, you know, last fall was the Chinese weapons buy that they did where they bought a significant number of rifles, pistols and machine guns through a Chinese contract. Some of those weapons have already been delivered. That was a case where they, you know, had a need. They went out and looked on the market and came up with the best deal, contracted for it and did all that on their own without any coalition assistance, and that's a sign of an increasing capability and confidence to be able to do some of this on their own.

So in those areas, like I said, it varies from area to area fairly markedly and although the capability is growing, in some of those areas, it's going to take awhile.

I'd like to mention another area of institutional development though and that's some things that's much harder to see, but they're developing institutional capacity at some really new and unique things for this particular interior forces. The inspector general organization has been developed and is functioning much better I would say that it's partially effective. The internal affairs organization in the ministries has, frankly, been quite remarkable.

The numbers of cases that they're opening, I think, last year in all of 2007, they had close to 10,000 cases total where accusations were made of either sectarian or corrupt behavior that they opened up investigations on. They completed most of those investigations during the course of the year, I think, they carried over -- I can't remember the number off the top of my head, but probably somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 cases were still open that they carried over from the year, but the very important thing is the information that we have is that close to 4,000 people inside the ministry were either punished, fired, early retired, reassigned or something as a result of those investigations, which is a significant part of this change that's been occurring in the ministry to try to establish accountability, to try to ensure police, not only enforce the law, but obey the law and that kind of thing that is the push with the minister of interior. So that kind of institutional capacity is also starting to develop and I think that's a positive sign, still, I have to tell you there's a long way to go in all of these things before you would consider this to be a fully independent, functional, you know, institution like you and I are used to, but compared to what they were a year or two ago, I think, it is hugely different, certainly, since I was last here, which I left in the spring of 2005, it is a huge change. I would not have imagined they could make this much progress that quickly.

MR. HOLT: All right. Thank you very much.

We're just about of time here, sir, Major General Michael D. Jones with the Bloggers Roundtable. He's the commanding general for the Coalition Police Assistance Training Team in Iraq.

Sir, do you have any final thoughts or final comments for us?

GEN. JONES: Well, first thing is, did I miss anybody? Is there somebody who didn't get a chance to ask their question because I'm so long-winded?

MR. HOLT: I think everybody was -- I think we got everybody.

GEN. JONES: Okay. All right. Excellent.

The only thing just so I'll close, first of all, those are great questions and I appreciate you all's interest. I think that we need to be balanced in our view of this. I tend to get very excited about the amount of progress that we're making, but at the same time, we just need to understand that the challenges are fairly significant and it's going to take continued courage and commitment on the part of the police to overcome them and we're seeing that.

The unfortunate statistic that we look at, you know, everyday is the police casualty rate is about doubled that of military forces. And so the police are out there and they are working very hard at doing their duty and the beneficiaries of what they're doing is, I think, a significantly changed security environment that most Iraqis are getting to live in, but we also shouldn't underestimate either the challenges of trying to build an institution like this that can function in an environment where you have representative government and freedom and the rule of law, and we also shouldn't underestimate the viciousness of the folks who want to oppose it, some of which are here in the country in the form of al Qaeda, in other kinds of groups that are extremists, and frankly, some unfriendly neighbors who may not want this to be a success.

And so they have to work against both of those things and I wouldn't want to portray, you know, an underestimation of the challenges and the difficulty that lie ahead, but at the same time, I think we ought to give credit to the very courageous police forces and the courageous leadership that's really taking a run at making a change and significant progress inside the ministry.

And so, again, thank you all for your interest and your attention. I hope that was helpful for you.

MR. HOLT: Thank you very much, sir. And we look forward to speaking to you again.

GEN. JONES: Okay. Great. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Thank you, sir.

END.